

Digital Storyteller: National Cemetery Places and People



Project Title	Digital Storyteller: National Cemetery Places and People
Project Summary	Help us tell veterans' stories and interpret U.S. history, such as noteworthy military service, commemorative monuments, architecture, and Memorial Day ceremonies associated with VA national cemeteries.
Country	United States
Agency	Veterans Affairs Department
DoS Office	N/A
Post	N/A
Section	N/A
Number of Interns	3

Project Description

The NCA History Office is seeking up to three (3) interns to create accurate, research-based content that is complete and ready to publish on its website. Interns will research and analyze primary and secondary source information relating to veterans buried in our national cemeteries and/or the memorial monuments placed there to honor them.

The Department of Veterans Affairs manages 135 national cemeteries across the country. Many were established during the Civil War or began as burying grounds in military forts along the western frontier. This project offers the opportunity to explore the histories of these properties, and the stories of some of the veterans who, in their time and place, are associated with events of lasting impact. Who is honored with burial in a national cemetery, and how are some groups remembered as time has passed?

NCA History project topics:

- Memorial Day commemoration in local communities, themes of remembrance and reconciliation and the role of women as stewards of history and memory;
- Noteworthy interments, troops who answered the call to serve the nation, such as members of the U.S. Colored Troops – black men fighting for freedom and pushing for equal rights 100 years before the Civil Rights Act was signed. NCA needs assistance to research these stories and themes so they can be shared with the public;
- National cemetery superintendents: a position created in 1867 to manage these sacred grounds, and provide honorably discharged, disabled volunteer veterans with housing and a livelihood. NCA would like to uncover the history of individual superintendents stationed in Beaufort (SC), Fort Snelling (MN), and San Francisco (CA) national cemeteries;
- National cemetery architecture reflects changing vernacular styles and geographic influence, and demonstrates

the nation's stewardship of these places over time. NCA has completed some research on lodges and rostrums to support this topic; and

- Foreign-national prisoners of war from World War I and World War II interred in VA cemeteries;
- NCA manages hundreds of commemorative monuments that date to the 19th and early 20th century, donated by military groups. NCA seeks assistance evaluating existing research material and conducting new research to document the history of key monuments (e.g. sculptor, manufacturer, dedication) and writing compelling content to publish on the NCA website.

Desired Skills Interests

Additional Information

All veterans are honored equally for their service to the nation. In this project, we will focus on those known for their military achievements, like receiving the Medal of Honor, or for accomplishments in their civilian lives or circumstances of death that resonate on the national stage. Such Notable Persons are highlighted on each cemetery webpage, and contributions by virtual interns will add to our understanding of the individuals and of a shared history that the public is eager to learn. This project is on-going, and for the internship we will concentrate on the NCA priority areas: Prisoners of war, the role of women, and memory; USCT; national cemetery superintendents; and commemorative monuments.

The NCA History Program is looking for individuals with excellent plain language writing and editing skills, including familiarity with writing for web publication. Experience in tailoring content and style for a specific audience a plus. To learn more about what we do, please visit: <https://www.cem.va.gov/cem/history/index.asp>.

Methodology and Requirements:

Interns will use substantial available primary and secondary records about the individuals interred in NCA cemetery landscapes, and documentation about standard built features (buildings, structures, monuments), including NCA archives, newspapers/periodicals, burial ledgers, ephemera, federal records in the public domain (Compiled Military Service Records and pension files, National Archives & Records Administration, Library of Congress, Smithsonian Institution's SIRIS database of sculpture) and online sources, such as Ancestry.com, Fold3.com. All sources used must be cited for NCA fact-checking. Each project must be completed by the end of the internship, to include all content (written text with footnotes and sources used; graphics with owner, date, repository, creator, and copyright information) submitted to NCA in an editable Word format and separate jpg/tiff files AND any proposed digital format. An author's style guide and related direction will be provided to support writing/editing deliverables.

Required Skills or Interests:

We seek help telling the stories of our nation's veterans and of the national cemeteries established to honor their service and sacrifice across time. If you enjoy art, architecture and public sculpture; historic landscape design; and American history and patriotic popular culture, this is the position for you! Interest in the built environment, historic preservation, and cultural resource documentation is essential. Studies in the related fields of public history, library science, interpretation, and collections management would be beneficial to this work.

Language Requirements

None